AN INSTRUMENTALIST'S GUIDE TO THE PERPETUATION OF HUMAN INDIVIDUALITY

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para María Elena
Sin mi media naranja todo sería caos.

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My references to Dewey's work are to the critical edition, *The Collected Works of John Dewey, 1882-1953*, edited by Jo Ann Boydston (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press 1969-1991). The critical edition is published in three multiple-volume series—*The Early Works: 1882-1898* (EW), *The Middle Works: 1899-1924* (MW), and *The Later Works: 1925-1953* (LW). These abbreviations are followed by the volume number and the page number of the text. For instance, page 90 of volume 14 of *The Middle Works* would be cited as follows: MW 14:90.

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Introduction[1]

John Dewey's account of human individuality blends various ideas that cut across many of his works.[2] In "Time and Individuality," Dewey discusses the essence of the individual as "temporal seriality."[3] In *Human Nature and Conduct*, he talks about the self as a collection of habits that change throughout one's life.[4] In *A Common Faith*, Dewey calls the whole self an ideal.[5] Furthermore, Dewey addresses the issue of one's individuality being threatened if one falls victim to mechanistic and mindless routines; that is, when routine shrouds one's daily activities, moral and intellectual growth is stunted.[6] Ensnarement in routine is the mechanization of daily activities that unfold in an uninspired and lethargic manner. Although Dewey discusses how individuality can be

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[1] In my presentation of Dewey's account of human individuality I am acknowledging the historical context in which he wrote. Moreover, Dewey's philosophical thoughts have much in common with two other major American pragmatists—Charles S. Peirce and William James. I am aware that certain lines of thought can be traced between all three philosophers; however, I would like to focus specifically on Dewey's thoughts regarding human individuality.

[2] Throughout this thesis, three terms will be used synonymously—'individual', 'person', and 'self'. By using these terms interchangeably, I do not intend to ignore linguistic subtleties; rather my goal is to present the terms as I think Dewey would. In other words, I understand Dewey to use the three terms synonymously. For instance, in "Time and Individuality," Dewey uses 'person' and 'individual' synonymously throughout an entire paragraph. See LW 14:102. Another example comes in *Human Nature and Conduct*. In a single sentence, Dewey uses 'self' and 'person' as two names for the same thing. He means that a 'self' is another name for a 'person'. See MW 14:40. In my understanding of how Dewey uses these terms, if 'individual' is synonymous with 'person', and if 'person' is synonymous with 'self', then 'self' is synonymous with 'individual'. As I am aware that there are distinctions between the terms, I am not sure that I would necessarily use the terms interchangeably. Nevertheless, I am presenting the terms as I think Dewey would.

[3] LW 14:98-114.

[4] MW 14:21.

[5] LW 9:14.

[6] Dewey saw philosophy as a tool for societal advancement. Hildebrand calls this Dewey's meliorism, which is described as, "the belief that *this* life is neither perfectly good nor bad; it can be improved only through human effort. Philosophy's motive for existing, then, is to make life better," (Hildebrand, *Dewey*, 5). Thus, when I say growth, I have in mind the idea that on Dewey's account life can always be improved. Additionally, by routine, I mean mechanical actions that become hardened and automatic. Dewey saw this mechanization of humanity taking place during his lifetime. He wrote about it in *Individualism Old and New*. See LW 5:58-76.

threatened, his thoughts on the subject nonetheless turn on the idea that if life is to be meaningful, one must learn to express one's individuality.[7] For Dewey, the authentic expression of individuality is art. But, how does one express one's individuality? Are there any tools within Dewey's philosophy that can be used to ensure the perpetuation of one's individuality?

The impetus for this thesis is to provide an analysis of key texts that are not only relevant to Dewey's account of human individuality, but that are also relevant to Dewey's instrumentalism. Through close textual analysis, I will seek to highlight elements in Dewey's philosophy that can be used to ensure the continuation of one's individuality. The following question will thus serve as a guide throughout this inquiry: "If human individuality can be threatened and even lost, what are some practical ideas in Dewey's philosophy that can be used to ensure the perpetuation of one's individuality?"

Dewey accounts for human selfhood or, as he says—human individuality, by re-thinking the traditional concept of selfhood.[8] On Dewey's view, human individuality consists in one's creation of a distinctive history—a history that is united in time and expressed through narrative. Individuality is not immediately given; that is, being an individual means that one constructs and learns to express his or her history. The creation

[7] Dewey does not think of individuals as mere points in time; instead, individuals are themselves distinct beings with temporally unified histories that are created out of the events through which each individual lives. Reducing an individual to a point in time, on Dewey's account, does little justice to the idea that individuality is something created, not given. Thus, when Dewey talks of individuality, he seems to have in mind something richer than the reduction of an individual to a particular point in space. Individuality is not only inclusive of one's physical attributes and spatial location, but it also incorporates how *this* individual is distinct from *that* individual. Distinctions between individuals will be experiential, as no two individuals undergo the same experiences.

[8] Dewey employed a similar thought-process in some of his other literature. Dewey re-thinks or re-conceives terms such as "experience" and "democracy". For example see "Democracy is Radical," LW 11: 296-299. See also LW 1:10-41. See also "Creative Democracy—The Task Before Us," LW 14:224.

of one's history comes about through one's efforts to be actively engaged in any experience one has. In this way, mindful involvement in one's daily experiences is crucial to the art of self-making. But, just as one constructs a unique history, that history can be threatened and easily lost. When one becomes cloaked in mindless routine, one fails to grow intellectually, morally, and socially. This is problematic because one's individuality is at risk of being lost rather than meaningfully constructed. It is necessary to possess the tools to break the bonds of monotonous routine so that one's individual history can be created and told. I suggest in this thesis that inquiry, ideals, and habits—three defenses against entrapment in routine, are practical assets in Dewey's philosophy that can be used to stave off the onset of a fading career and the death of one's individuality. The preservation and growth of one's individuality can be accomplished through being mindful of the experiences one undergoes, as this will facilitate one's ability to make each experience as meaningful as possible. However, before I get ahead of myself, I would like to give a brief summary of some of the important aspects of Dewey's account of human individuality that will help set the tone for the rest of the thesis.

By and large, Dewey's account of human individuality should be understood in the context of his philosophical naturalism, which he oftentimes combines with social psychology. As a constituent of his naturalism, Dewey rejects the idea that the self is a substance. Instead, he replaces the notion of substance with "temporal seriality." In effect, Dewey's account of human selfhood dislodges the notion that there is something absolutely permanent or fixed about human nature. Human individuals are beings in time, and although Dewey says that time is the essence of individuality, I do not understand his

use of essence to mean that there is an unchanging and permanent soul that underlies each one of us. If there is anything solid or fixed about individuality it is that we have being, but this being is not a complete soul housed inside a body. In his rejection of the self as a substance, Dewey claims that an individual is an "extensive event or course of events." Individuality on Dewey's account does not mean a specific self as an unchanging substance that persists through time; rather individuality is the "uniqueness of the history, of the career," of a human being. A person's history or career persists through time, not an individual self in the sense of soul or substance. We are not automatically born with individuality, but rather we construct it. To hold that a human organism is an individual the minute he or she enters the world is, for Dewey, a deterministic claim; that is, if one holds that individuality is given, then this suggests that an individual could know exactly what will happen to it at any moment in its life. However, as Dewey constantly reminds us, life is full of contingencies. The ways in which we interact with those contingencies will help shape the growing individual we are now into the individual we will become. Thus, it does not make sense to say that one's individual career could ever be known *a priori* or before one has actually lived through his or her own course of events.

A human on Dewey's account is a biological organism comprised of habits that allow it to function in its environment.[9] Specific to this organism is the fact that it experiences life as a continuous process. Dewey's rendering of a human as an organism is in line with his acceptance of the science of his day, especially the implications of

[9] Dewey's use of the term "organism" to refer to the self intentionally tries to break away from the idea, especially of Modern philosophers, that the self is a substance. See Vincent M. Colapietro. "Embodied, Enculturated Agents." In *Dewey Reconfigured: Essays on Deweyan Pragmatism*, ed. Casey Haskins and David I. Seiple (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1999), 63-84.

Darwinism.[10] As a biological organism, a human is always part of an environment. As it grows, any human organism has a set of habits that are gained gradually as it continues to evolve throughout its lifetime. Moreover, as a human organism matures its mind begins to develop. A natural consequence of mental growth is a human's ability to learn language.

From an early age, we are all subject to learning linguistic symbols that aid in our understanding of who we are; that is, when we learn to use self-referent symbols such as "I", "Me", or "Mine", we begin to formulate an idea of ourselves as being in contrast with other experiential objects and other members of our community. With culture and community always in the background, Dewey's account of human individuality is one that seeks to naturalize the human species, setting it in the context of an environment in which it grows and develops throughout its life. Furthermore, Dewey's view of human selfhood incorporates his naturalistic metaphysics. Dewey takes it as a fact that life as an organism experiences it is a curious mixture of stable and hazardous conditions.[11] Furthermore, humans oftentimes experience situations in which their habits fail to connect their actions with the environment. When we experience these kinds of situations, Dewey points out that we experience an emotional reaction in which we desire something that will help solve the conflicted situation. These emotional reactions against the state of affairs in which our habits do not function cause us to set up ideals for ourselves. Ideals are important throughout our lives in that they aid in motivating us to become something different than what we currently are.

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[10] See "The Influence of Darwinism on Philosophy," MW 4:3-13.

[11] See LW 1:42-68. See also Craig A. Cunningham. "Dewey's Metaphysics and the Self." *Studies in Philosophy and Education.* 13 (1994/1995):353.

Dewey's account of human individuality portrays the human in naturalistic terms. Individuality comes as result of our experiencing time, which makes us who we are and unites the events that make up our distinct histories.[12] However, it is curious to note that Dewey says that our individuality can be threatened when we become encrusted in routine. When we fail to take on new situations that require new habits of thinking and acting, we slouch to a level of predictable behavior. If we are to grow, we must be willing to learn throughout our lives so as to make each experience meaningful. Growth is important because it facilitates the acquisition of new habits that direct change. Paying close attention to three practical ideas in Dewey's philosophy can facilitate growth—inquiry, ideals, and habits. In order to continue to develop one's unique history, one must always be open to the possibility of growth, which for Dewey is the end of all activities. Therefore, in order to ensure the growth of each individual's history, I suggest that the connection between time, inquiry, ideals, and habits is of the utmost importance to this issue. For Dewey, time makes an individual what he or she is. However, one does not always know who he or she is because one sometimes gets bogged down in routines that require little, if any, creativity or thought; that is, one is failing to gain anything meaningful from different experiences and one's unique history is at risk of stagnating or even fizzling out. Avoiding these cumbersome routines can be done through inquiry into the type of self one wants to become. Inquiry opens the way for a self to survey many possibilities of what it might become. When an inquiry of this kind is conducted, one is examining the ideal self one has in mind. After inquiry has come to an end, a new self

[12] For Dewey, time is not an independent factor in experience, but rather it is part of experience itself. It is part of the "integral aspect of the experience of things, as a quality of experience." See Martin Coleman. "The Meaninglessness of Coming Unstuck in Time." *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society*. 44, no. 4, (Fall 2008): 681-698.

emerges with adjusted habits and modified thought processes. These factors are in time, which unites a person's narrative to a person's history. Thus, the relationship between time, inquiry, ideals, and habits is of the utmost importance to the continued construction of one's own unique history or career.

In an effort to make the aforesaid claims clear, the first chapter of this thesis will include an analysis of "Time and Individuality," which seeks to draw out the important aspect of time as it relates to human individuality. Additionally, the first chapter will include an analysis of "The Pattern of Inquiry," in which Dewey articulates "a common structure or pattern" of inquiry that is applicable to commonsense issues as well as scientific issues. By outlining this pattern I mean to demonstrate how inquiry allows a self to assess various possibilities for resolving a situation in which its individuality is at risk of being lost due to becoming encased in habit. Through inquiry one clarifies the meaning of a specific ideal—an ideal that one not only wants to achieve, but also an ideal that one hopes will successfully lead to the growth of one's unique history.

Knowing about an ideal is important because one essentially comes to know one's self as a result of inquiring into an ideal, but this knowledge also needs to be put to use. In this case, the problem of reviving a self's unique history is of great importance. Paying attention to one's ideals will help to secure a self's continuous growth. To make Dewey's thoughts about ideals clear, the second chapter will include analyses of key passages from *Human Nature and Conduct* that highlight the nature of ideals. I will also incorporate analyses of passages from *A Common Faith* and *Ethics* in which Dewey discusses ideals. Additionally, I will rely on secondary literature to help make clear some of the assumptions underlying Dewey's rendering of ideals.

After commenting on time, inquiry, and ideals, I will bring in Dewey's idea of habits. Specifically, in the third chapter I will discuss what an "adjustment" is and how a self that is comprised of habits can utilize the knowledge gained about an ideal through inquiry to make necessary changes in its habits.[13] I will provide a detailed look at sections of *Human Nature and Conduct* dealing with habits and impulses so as to make evident the connection between what one does with the knowledge of an ideal gained in inquiry and how that knowledge is applicable to the readjustment of habits; for it is through the realigning of habits that one essentially changes one's self and thereby takes up an event which becomes part of an overall history.

Before moving into the core of the project, I would like to give a brief survey of recent literature pertaining to Dewey's idea of the self. In "Embodied, Enculturated Agents," Vincent Colapietro (1999) focuses on the issue of human subjectivity as it applies to Dewey's view of the self. Specific to Colapietro's view is his characterization of the Deweyan self as an agent. Colapietro goes on to underscore the importance of how selves are not strictly physical beings. Selves grow and change dynamically as they interact with an environment. At the core of Colapietro's argument is the claim that in order to understand Dewey's view of the self we must first acknowledge that organic life happens on an experiential continuum and that this continuum underlies the acquisition of habits. Moreover, as organism and environment interact, an organism learns to use signs and symbols for self-reference. Thus, the relationship of a self to itself is a derivative of

[13] Dewey views the organic structure of the self as a collection of habits. See part one of MW 14:15-62.

the symbol a self uses to distinguish itself from other selves.[14] The article also explains how Dewey's conception of the self cannot be divorced from its culture and environment.[15] Our environments are rich in heritage and meaning and as a self grows, its habits are always tinged with cultural information. Indeed, this is why Colapietro chooses the word "enculturated." This piece establishes the idea that to formulate a conception of one's self, one must recognize that there is a particular sign that stands for the type of self one identifies oneself to be. Although Dewey does not refer to ideals as "signs," I think he would nonetheless agree with Colapietro that an ideal re-presents an experienced good.[16] In order to know about ideals, Dewey would say that they should be submitted to inquiry. Thus Colapietro's argument highlights the idea that we ought to be aware of the symbols (or ideals) we use to refer to ourselves, but I would like to take his idea a step further and say that ideals as symbols must be submitted to inquiry to gain self-knowledge.

An article by Thomas Alexander (1997) called, "Beyond the Death of Art: Community and the Ecology of the Self," shows the relationship between art and community. Central to this piece is Alexander's reliance on Dewey's idea of how individuals come to know themselves through communal interaction. The human

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[14] See Vincent M. Colapietro. "Embodied, Enculturated Agents." In *Dewey Reconfigured: Essays on Deweyan Pragmatism*, ed. Casey Haskins and David I. Seiple (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1999), 63-84.

[15] Ibid.

[16] For example, Dewey says, "Because of this mixture of the regular and that which cuts across stability, a good object once experienced acquires ideal quality and attracts demand and effort to itself," (LW 1:57). Here Dewey suggests that once we experience something good, we want to recreate or re-present a similar experience; thus, we set up ideals for ourselves that act as signs that tell us how to create a similar experience to the one that was previously experienced as good. Even though I do not think Dewey's description of ideals is intentionally semiotic, I nonetheless think that he would not object to calling an ideal a sign that stands for an experience that was experienced as good to the interpreter of the sign who wishes to recreate a similar experience.

organism grows and learns through its interactions with other members of a community.[17] Much like Colapietro, Alexander's argument includes the idea of continuity. However, Alexander's discussion of the temporal nature of the self falls within the larger theme of narrative. Once a human begins to use language, it can communicate its narrative so as to recognize itself as a distinct member of a community. Self-recognition, moreover, does not happen in isolation, and this is why Alexander stresses the importance of a community in self-development. As a self develops with its environment, it learns to distinguish itself from others selves by telling its own story. Expressing the self through narrative therefore allows one to create an image of the type of self one is. This image is then compared and contrasted with other selves in a given community. Becoming the self one describes in narrative form is not without obstacles. Sometimes we do not know which ideal to pursue or which action to take. Our narratives are put on hold while we inquire because, as Dewey might say, "genuine time" has ceased "to be an integral element" in our "being".[18] Once inquiry is finished, our self-narratives can resume and our stories can grow.

"Dewey's Book on the Moral Self," draws on Dewey's *Democracy and Education* to explain how education is vital to the idea of continual self-growth. David Hansen (2006) traces the origin of Dewey's concept of the self to R.W. Emerson's idea of a self as a receptor of experience.[19] He later explains how Dewey uses the term *interest*

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[17] See Thomas Alexander. "Beyond the Death of Art: Community and the Ecology of the Self." In *Philosophy in Experience: American Philosophy in Transition*, ed. Richard E. Hart and Douglas R. Anderson (New York: Fordham University Press, 1997), 175-194.

[18] See LW 14:98-114.

[19] See David T. Hansen. "Dewey's Book of the Moral Self." In *John Dewey and Our Educational Prospect,* edited by Hansen (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2006), 165-187.

to demonstrate how one can come to self-knowledge; that is, we know about ourselves through our selective interests. We cultivate those interests in such a way as to help us define who we are. We do this by noting that the self "dwells in situations." Since situations act as a medium through which selves interact with objects, being attuned to how one selects those objects is telling of what kind of self one is. Hansen's idea seems to be in line with Dewey's description of an interest as a union of a self, an object, and an end.[20] Through uniting ourselves to an object and an end, we form interests. Thus, in order to form a conception of one's self, one must be aware of one's interests, as they will act as indicators of what can be said of the conception once it is formed. Knowing about that conception, though, can only be done through the process of inquiry.

Although the articles mentioned are not exhaustive of every article on the topic, my purpose in discussing them is to show how recent scholarship suggests that a conception of the self is formed through the use of language and other signs that selves use to distinguish themselves from other selves. These articles are helpful because they directly relate to Dewey's claim that the essence of human individuality is "temporal seriality;" that is, since Dewey's view of the self is not one in which experiences inhere within a substantial soul, but is instead a view in which events inhere in time, Dewey needs a way to account for how an individual is able to talk about those events which make up his or her essence. Chapter five in *Experience and Nature* would suffice to give an answer as to how an individual communicates his or her history; however, sources such as Colapietro, Alexander, and Hansen, reinforce the idea that communication among

[20] See LW 7:290.

individuals in a given community is a major constituent of self-making.[21] The information in these sources that is relevant to this thesis is brought to the foreground when appropriate, but other ideas like community are discussed less. However, the latter ideas should also be understood as important to Dewey's account of selfhood even though this thesis is not the appropriate piece in which to discuss them.

A survey of articles pertinent to this thesis has demonstrated that although Dewey would probably agree with the aforementioned commentary, he would also direct attention to inquiry, ideals, and habits. For Dewey, inquiry has a vital role in its connection to knowledge. Inquiry essentially leads to knowing about something. In fact, *Logic: The Theory of Inquiry* demonstrates Dewey's position that logic is a practical activity. Moreover, chapter six of Dewey's *Logic* deals primarily with the process of inquiry itself.[22] Thus, I would like to suggest that inquiry, ideals, and habits are indispensable to Dewey's account of human individuality. Insofar as individuality can be lost, one needs a way to block the stagnation of habits and the possible destruction of one's self. Inquiry into an ideal opens the self to future possibilities concerning the growth of its history. Examining an ideal gives one a chance to find out what will need to be done in order for the ideal to be achieved. Ideals that are achieved get acted out through various re-aligned or readjusted habits. Modifying our habits means that we change, which in Deweyan terms means that we cultivate a distinct and memorable history out of the events that make up our lives. Living life in this way allows for our histories to flourish as we learn to make each experience as meaningful as possible.

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[21] See Dewey's comments on the nature of communication in chapter five of LW 1:132-161.

[22] See chapter six in LW 12:105-122.

Chapter I: Time and Inquiry

Dewey takes the idea of change seriously. Perhaps this is an understatement considering that the main texts analyzed in this thesis contain numerous passages in which Dewey suggests how change and time (as a constituent of change), are part of the universe. For example, in "Time and Individuality" Dewey discusses the application of time to human individuality. This piece is important to this thesis because Dewey demonstrates his move away from the view that the human self is an unchanging substance or soul that persists through time. Instead, Dewey tells of human individuality as being a unique history of events linked together in time and told through narrative. My purpose in this part of the chapter is to single out passages in "Time and Individuality" that emphasize the essence of the human individual as Dewey sees it.

Dewey begins the essay by stating a pervasive belief among peoples of all cultures. He says:

> The uncertainty of life and one's final lot has always been associated with mutability, while unforeseen and uncontrollable change has been linked with time. Time is the tooth that gnaws; it is the destroyer; we are born only to die and every day brings us one day nearer to death. Everything perishes in time, but men are unable to believe that perishing is the final word. (LW 14:98)

A desire for immortality is backed up by what Dewey calls a "human" reason. We simply do not want to die nor are we very willing to accept the idea that death is the final word on the matter. However, Dewey notes that various philosophers have nonetheless been influenced by this common belief and have set out to describe reality accordingly. For instance, Dewey says:

> The idealist has found it [immortality] in a realm of rational ideas; the materialist in the laws of matter. The mechanist pins his faith to eternal atoms and to unmoved and unmoving space. The teleologist finds that all

> change is subservient to fixed ends and final goals, which are the one steadfast thing in the universe, conferring upon changing things whatever meaning and value they possess. (LW 14:99)

For the longest time, philosophers, scientists, mathematicians, and common people held tightly to the idea that their time on Earth was merely a smaller part of a life that would continue after death. Dewey notes that a cultural swing in the attitude toward change did not occur until the later years of the eighteenth century. He says, "Not every change was regarded as a sign of advance but the general trend of change, cosmic and social, was thought to be toward the better," (LW 14:99). Whereas peoples of past ages had considered time to be "the destroyer," the cultural shift in attitude toward change rendered a positive view of change and consequently of time as well.[23] Even though there was this cultural shift in attitude toward time, Dewey mentions that the temporal was not given its proper place in the natural order of the universe. He writes:

> This new philosophy [of Herbert Spencer], however, was far from giving the temporal an inherent position and function in the constitution of things. Change was working on the side of man but only because of *fixed* laws which governed the changes that take place. There was hope in change just because the laws that govern it do not change…the faith and hope of philosophers and intellectuals were still tied to the unchanging. (LW 14:100)

Although attitudes about change and time had shifted, the import of what change in nature actually meant had not yet been challenged. Dewey notes that not until the philosophies of Bergson and James did this notion come under attack. With respect to Bergson, Dewey writes, "…he criticized mechanistic and teleological theories on the ground that both are guilty of the same error," which was that they argued that, "fixed laws which govern change and fixed ends toward which changes tend are both the

[23] See LW 14:99-100.

products of a backward look, one that ignores the forward movement of life," (LW 14:101). James, on the other hand, had a different way of attacking the problem. Dewey says, "Mechanism and idealism were abhorrent to him [James] because they both hold to a closed universe in which there is no room for novelty and adventure," (LW 14:101). Furthermore, Dewey notes that until Alfred N. Whitehead, philosophers had not understood that reality is process.

At this point in "Time and Individuality," Dewey leaves his historical account of the ways in which change and time had been viewed. He moves on to the issue of the connection between time and human individuality. The import of the historical survey, though, should not be taken with a grain of salt, for it is Dewey's way of demonstrating that change and especially time have not until recently (within the last century) been given an "inherent position and constitution in the function of things." Thus, in the remainder of the essay, Dewey argues, though sometimes subtly, that time does have an inherent place in the nature of things and that "everything recorded is an historical event; it is something temporal." To overlook these points is to undervalue his account of what the human individual is.

Since I cannot begin to account for the process of life in a way that differs from Dewey's own account, I prefer to share his words. He writes:

> Take the account of the life of any person, whether the account is a biography or an autobiography. The story beings with birth, a temporal incident; it extends to include the temporal existence of parents and ancestry. It does not end with death, for it takes in the influence upon subsequent events of the words and deeds of the one whose life is told. (LW 14:102)

Here Dewey clearly does not have any notion of substance at work. This is on purpose. Dewey is not Descartes, and the notion of the self, soul, or human individual as a

substance is something that is not found in Dewey's writings. Instead, he is out to replace the idea that the self is a substantial entity that somehow persists through time. Dewey's reworking of this old concept turns on his displacing permanent substance with the idea of temporal seriality.[24] Dewey continues by saying:

> The individual whose life history is told, be it Socrates or Nero, St. Francis or Abraham Lincoln, is an extensive event; or if you prefer it is a course of events each of which takes up into itself something of what went before and leads on to that which comes after…the human individual is himself a history, a career…(LW 14:102)

Taking the issue of time seriously, Dewey argues that time is not only a characteristic of the universe itself, but also that time enters into the very being of every living organism, changing it throughout its life. Indeed, Dewey says, "Temporal seriality is the very essence, then, of the human individual," (LW 14:102). This very sentence is the lifeblood of Dewey's rendering of the human self or individual. That each one of us has a unique story or history to tell as we grow throughout our lives is part and parcel of what it means to be human. Individuality is not given at birth. It is something that each human organism must create as it goes through life. Dewey clarifies this idea in the following passage:

> As Lincoln is a particular development in time, so is every other human individual. Individuality is the uniqueness of the history, of the career, not something given once for all at the beginning, which then proceeds to unroll as a ball of yarn may be unwound. (LW 14:102-103)

If we are to throw out the idea of an individual as a substance that has being in an eternal realm, we must interpret Dewey to place the emphasis of what it means to be human not in the individual him or herself, but rather in the unique history that a

[24] This idea is supported by Max Fisch's characterization of major themes traversing classic American philosophy. Fisch identifies fourteen major themes, the fourth of which is the idea that classic American philosophers such as Peirce, Dewey, and Whitehead do away with substance completely and replace it with temporality. See Max Fisch. "General Introduction" In *Classic American Philosophers,* ed. Max Fisch. (Fordham University Press: New York, 1996), 22.

particular human creates. Thus, the "I" of Descartes has been reconceived not as an individual, yet diaphanous soul that is somehow magically connected to its body, but the "I" is now to be found within the course of events that make up an individual's life.

It is curious to note that if time changes "every living organism," it would seem as though Dewey might be hard-pressed to distinguish the human individual from other living organisms such as birds or amoebas. Given that each living thing is an event, each living organism should, upon Dewey's view, have its own unique history. In fact, Dewey himself comments on this saying, "…the principle of a developing career applies to all things in nature, as well as to human beings—that they are born, undergo qualitative changes, and finally die, giving place to other individuals," (LW 14:108). Here, one might contend that Dewey is being reductionistic by saying individuality applies to all things in nature, not just humans. In effect, one might argue that Dewey's view of individuality takes away anything that makes humans special or distinct from other natural organisms. But, to argue this would be to miss the point of Dewey's naturalism; that is, humans are not elevated animals perched atop a hierarchy of being. Humans undergo biological processes just like any other organism. In short, I do not think Dewey would say that humans are any more special or distinct than other organisms. Viewed in this way, humans and amoebas reside on the same plane of existence.

What distinguishes the human from the amoeba or the dog is the fact that humans eventually learn language; that is, if Colapietro and Alexander are right, and I think they are, humans have the capacity to learn the language of their culture. This of course is a process just as much as anything else; but the fact of the matter is that the human individual, once it begins to acquire the meanings of linguistic symbols, will eventually

learn to distinguish itself from other members of its community. Through the use of self-referent symbols human individuals will eventually learn who they are by contrasting the ways in which those symbols are used to refer to other individuals in the same community.[25] This distinctive feature of using language thereby enables them to tell their unique stories that are continuously wound together throughout time. Neither amoebas nor dogs have this capacity. Even though one might say that Dewey's account of individuality does little to distinguish humans from other organisms, I think this is only a superficial worry that results from a shallow reading of Deweyan literature. A more robust interpretation of Deweyan selfhood would include the idea that humans have certain unique characteristics such as memory, the use of language, the ability to love, etc. Moreover, these characteristics must be taken into account if we are to gain a full appreciation for Dewey's account of human individuality.

I would like to highlight the fact that just as an individual can and does construct a particular history, an individual can also lose his or her individuality by becoming encased in monotonous routines. Dewey says:

> Genuine time, if it exists as anything else except as the measure of motions in space, is all one with the existence of individuals as individuals, with the creative, with the occurrence of unpredictable novelties. Everything that can be said contrary to this conclusion is but a reminder that an individual may lose his individuality, for individuals become imprisoned in routine and fall to the level of mechanisms. Genuine time then ceases to be an integral element in their being. Our behavior becomes predictable because it is an external arrangement of what went before. (LW 14:112)

[25] See Vincent M. Colapietro. "Embodied, Enculturated Agents." In *Dewey Reconfigured: Essays on Deweyan Pragmatism*, ed. Casey Haskins and David I. Seiple (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1999), 63-84. See also Thomas Alexander. "Beyond the Death of Art: Community and the Ecology of the Self." In *Philosophy in Experience: American Philosophy in Transition*, ed. Richard E. Hart and Douglas R. Anderson (New York: Fordham University Press, 1997), 175-194.

For Dewey, the overall end of any activity is growth, and when humans fall into "imprisoned" routines, they might continue to grow biologically, but they fail to grow intellectually and morally. Individuality is therefore at risk of being lost because genuine time does not act as "an integral element," in one's being; instead one remains encrusted in old habits that allow for mere survival. But, this type of subsistence seems banal if not a downright living death. We only have one life to live and in order to be artists and create a meaningful life, we must be willing to accept that time makes human individuality what it is. Dewey says, "Change is going to occur anyway, and the problem is the control of change in a given direction. The direction, the quality of change, is a matter of individuality," (LW 14:113). Thus, in order to direct the quality of change in our lives, we ought to be artists, creating a life full of meaning as we take in the events of our lives and continuously create our histories. Dewey says, "Art is not the possession of the few who are recognized writers, painters, and musicians; it is the authentic expression of any and all individuality," (LW 14:114).

We have seen that Dewey's account of the human individual relies on his idea that the self as a substance must be replaced by the idea that the essence of human individuality is "temporal seriality." Nothing is permanent in life. Applying this notion to his account of the human individual, Dewey argues that no substantial human soul persists after death. Time is the essence of who we are. As we experience the passing of time, each event is united and makes up part of our unique history. Even after our bodily death, our histories live on in the words and tales of our lives that are told by others.

Having commented on what human individuality is, I would like to emphasize that individuality can whither and die. Routines that take attention and thought away from

immediate tasks dull and numb the self. Without goals and aims, this type of self is in jeopardy of being blotted out of existence. When threats to a self's vitality arise, one realizes that one's habits and thought patterns have become fixed. There is little growth, intellectual or moral. An individual's history cannot continue to be constructed because his or her progress is hampered by routines that block growth. The problem of how to overcome stale habits has been recognized, and in order to resolve it, one must inquire.

In "The Pattern of Inquiry," Dewey clarifies his belief that inquiry should not be limited to the sciences. Inquiry should be applied to everyday situations (LW 12:105). Although inquiry is applicable to different areas of life, Dewey notes that inquiry undertaken by the scientist, logician, or the man of common sense has a similar pattern. Inquiry "has a common structure or pattern" and "this common structure is applied both in common sense and science, although because of the nature of the problems with which they are concerned, the emphasis upon the factors involved varies widely in the two modes," (LW 12:105). While the scientist might inquire about the structure of an atom, the man of common sense might inquire into how he can best get his door to stop squeaking. Although the two differ with respect to their questions, the steps that each will take to resolve their respective problems are quite similar.

Dewey's discussion of the common pattern of inquiry takes place within the realm of what he considers to be logic. He holds that "logical forms accrue to subject-matter when the latter is subjected to controlled inquiry," (LW 12:105). Moreover, Dewey argues that our formal conceptions of the objects of inquiry arise from everyday transactions (LW 12:106). Dewey shows that our conceptions of objects are not automatically given to us; that is, we cannot know *a priori* what any conception will be.

Claiming that a conception can be known before experiencing a situation in which the formalization of the conception is made is, by Dewey's standards, untrue to experience. In other words, since conceptions are understood experientially, Dewey argues that one first has to enter into a situation in which certain conceptions arise as a result of the transactions of a self and its environment. Furthermore, once formal conceptions have arisen, they are "formative" in that they "regulate the proper conduct of the activities out of which they develop," (LW 12:106). That is, after a formal conception has been identified, it guides the conduct of those who enter into situations in which the conception is used. For example, Dewey cites legal terms such as misdemeanor, crime, and torts. Insofar as lawyers and judges engage in situations in which they conceive of what the terms mean, their conduct will later be guided by those conceptions. The formalization of a conception will later serve lawyers and judges in that they will act based on the implications of the formal conception. For example, by distinguishing between a crime and a misdemeanor, a judge will hand out a sentence that is in accord with the consequences as they are implied in each case. A life-sentence for murder in the first degree, for instance, comes as a result of the consequences of what the formal conception of first-degree murder is. This particular consequence is applicable to the formal conception at hand, and not to other situations like fleeing the scene of an accident. Behavior is guided by the formal conceptions that come into view due to daily interactions in which those conceptions are used.

Inquiring into any aspect of life is a process. Dewey says:

> We know that some methods of inquiry are better than others in just the same way in which we know that some methods of surgery, farming, road-making, navigating or what-not are better than others. It does not follow in any of these cases that the 'better' methods are ideally perfect, or that they

> are regulative or 'normative' because of conformity to some absolute form. They are methods which experience up to the present time shows to be the best methods available for achieving certain results… (LW 12:108)

Following a particular method of inquiry will be regulated by what has and has not worked in the past. Methods that continue to prove effective to the architect, for instance, will no doubt be used to build safe and sturdy bridges. The architect, moreover, knows that a given method works based on the result of his or her actions. If a bridge is built using out-dated materials and techniques, it will probably not be very functional or safe. So as to construct a bridge that will last long into the future, the architect must trust the methods that experience has taught to be the most effective.

As an instrumentalist, Dewey believes that inquiry is useful in that one takes an unstable or confused situation and turns it into one that is stable. He says:

> *Inquiry is the controlled or directed transformation of an indeterminate situation into one that is so determinate in its constituent distinctions and relations as to convert the elements of the original situation into a unified whole*. (LW 12:108, italics his)

The goal of inquiry is to "terminate in the establishment of an objectively unified existential situation," (LW 12:109).

As inquiry gets underway, one must recognize an indeterminate situation. Since Dewey says that situations themselves are indeterminate, this means that the "peculiar quality of what pervades the given materials, constituting them a situation, is not just uncertainty at large; it is a unique doubtfulness which makes that situation to be just and only the situation it is," (LW 12:109). Underpinning the idea that what we experience can sometimes be a disarray of confused materials is Dewey's metaphysical commitment to

the stable and precarious nature of existence.[26] Realizing that a situation itself contains disjointed elements causes us to experience doubt; that is, before we can experience serious doubt, we must first take in from the environment clues that point to a discontinuous, troubled situation. As we take in those clues, we realize that we do not know what to do. Thus, Dewey says, "…there is a complete sense of panic," (LW 12:109).

An overwhelming feeling of confusion in which one does not know how to act can arise in any number of situations. In terms of inquiring into the self, one must recognize that an ideal has emerged as a response to blocked action. That is, daily interactions of the self and its environment produce ideals that surface so that the self can adjust its previous habits and thus experience unity with its environment. After having first projected thought forward into an imaginative scene, we deliberate or think critically so as to scrutinize an ideal. A deliberating self is a self that is involved in inquiry. In order for an ideal to be attained, the self must make an adjustment that both accommodates and adapts itself to the situation. Doing this is not simply a mental affair. Overcoming an indeterminate situation requires an understanding that a solution to the problem "concerns the interaction of organic responses and environing conditions in their movement toward an existential issue," (LW 12:111). A solution, then, will come as a result of an organism learning to adjust itself through the cooperation of habits and environing conditions.

Doubtful situations that need to be ordered and unified are not automatically labeled as problematic. Dewey says, "The indeterminate situation becomes problematic

[26] See LW 1:42-68.

in the very process of being subjected to inquiry," (LW 12:111). One cannot label a situation as being problematic without first having inquired into the situation. As the situation is thought about and inquired into, new factors emerge that were not noticed initially. Thus, the situation is fully recognized as being problematic only after one has begun inquiry into it.

For Dewey, a problem is not "a task to be performed which a person sets upon himself or that is placed upon him by others;" rather "a problem represents the partial transformation by inquiry of a problematic situation into a determinate situation," (LW 12:111-112). A problem that does not "grow out of an actual situation" is mere "busy-work," and this is because "a problem has no meaning save as the problem instituted has, in the very terms of its statement, reference to a possible solution," (LW 12:112).

Finding a possible solution involves looking for the "constituents" of a situation that are "settled" (LW 12:112). Dewey uses the example of a fire alarm going off in a crowd of people at an assembly hall to demonstrate his point. The fact that the alarm has sounded means that a fire is located *somewhere*. Moreover, the design of the assembly hall is an observable fact that is settled. The aisles and exits are in fixed places. Dewey says, "All of these observed conditions taken together constitute 'the facts of the case.' They constitute the terms of the problem, because they are conditions that must be reckoned with or taken account of in any relevant solution that is proposed," (LW 12:113). Securing the observable facts allows for a possible solution to be suggested.

Solutions arise as ideas, which "are anticipated consequences (forecasts) of what will happen when certain operations are executed under and with respect to observed conditions" (LW 12:113). Marked as a "possibility," an idea arises as "observation of

facts and suggested meaning or ideas arise and develop in correspondence with each other" (LW 12:113). In other words, ideas as solutions to problematic situations are grounded in the observable facts of an existential situation.

When ideas first come into view, Dewey calls them suggestions. They are vague and fuzzy. A suggestion becomes an idea when it is "examined with reference to its functional fitness; its capacity as a means of resolving the given situation," (LW 12:114). As ideas are turned over, Dewey calls this process reasoning. The result of reasoning is that "we are able to appraise better than we were at the outset, the pertinency and weight of the meaning now entertained with respect to its functional capacity" (LW 12:114). Finding out whether an idea will work involves acting on the idea. Dewey says, "The final test [of an idea]" is "when it is put into operation so as to institute by means of observations facts not previously observed, and is then used to organize them with other facts into a coherent whole," (LW 12:114).

Dewey notes that ideas and suggestions are not present in given existence, but exist as embodied symbols (LW 12:114). Insofar as an idea is a symbol, it exists as a possibility in present circumstances. For the symbol to become meaningful, it must be embodied in an actual experience. Dewey says, "Without some kind of symbol, no idea; a meaning that is completely disembodied can not be entertained or used," (LW 12:114). Thus, ideas become clearer as they are worked out and put to use in present conditions; that is, through concrete action, one is able to witness the functionality of an idea in a given situation.

Knowing whether an idea will solve a problematic situation involves understanding what the idea means in relation to other ideas. By acting on an idea, the

idea becomes part of the present situation. Once the idea has been acted on the meaning of the idea comes into view. When we examine the meaning of an idea, we are "noting what the meaning in question implies in relation to other meanings in the system of which it is a member," (LW 12:114). By observing the meaning of a term as it relates to a network of other meanings, we reach a meaning "which is more clearly *relevant* to the problem in hand than the originally suggested idea," (LW 12:115).

As one inquires as to whether a particular idea will solve a problematic situation, the idea becomes embodied through the actions of the one inquiring. Those actions are perceived via a social medium in which meaning is attached to them. Embodying an idea allows the idea to become actualized so that it can be understood as part of a network of other meanings. As other meanings are connected to the original idea, it thus gains clarity in that the one inquiring is able to see whether the idea is functioning in a way that organizes the confused situation into a unified whole.

Dewey relates the process of testing an idea to the process of testing a scientific hypothesis. He says:

> An hypothesis, once suggested and entertained, is developed in relation to other conceptual structures until it receives a form in which it can instigate and direct an experiment that will disclose precisely those conditions which have the maximum possible force in determining whether the hypothesis should be accepted or rejected. (LW 12:115)

It is important to note the role of actual existence because it is through brute existence that one is able to see whether or not the idea functions in a unifying manner. The scientist, for example, tests his hypothesis or idea against the actual conditions of nature. The man of common sense, moreover, tests his hypothesis or idea against actual conditions as well.

Inquiry, whether it pertains to science or everyday life, has a common pattern. The process through which one discovers what needs to be done in order to attain an ideal is not unlike the process one undergoes when discovering the functionality of ideas. Inasmuch as ideas arise as suggestions to problematic situations, ideals, too, arise as responses to conditions against which a self reacts. Our desires to recreate an enjoyable or 'good' experience cause us to create ideals. Through inquiry, an ideal is related to as many foreseeable consequences as possible, and this opens the way for possible meanings to be attached to the ideal. It is through the process of relating an ideal to its consequences and meanings that a self becomes familiar with the elements that need to be present in order for the ideal to be achieved. Moreover, as one traces out the implications of what acting on an ideal would entail, the ideal becomes part of the overall present situation. Taking steps toward achieving an ideal therefore aids in our understanding of how to modify present conditions in order to give the ideal a definite shape and form. As selves experience the actual transitions leading to the attainment of an ideal, the ideal gets worked out in present conditions. Hence, inquiry into an ideal is telling of what actual conditions must be met and which habits must be adjusted in order for a self to become the ideal it envisions.

Dewey's conception of selfhood has been discussed in relation to time and inquiry. We have not only seen that the essence of individuality is temporal seriality, but also that ideals arise naturally out of the daily transactions of organism and environment. Moreover, I have discussed the process of inquiry in which a self relates an ideal to any number of consequences and meanings that would follow from acting on an ideal. Furthermore, one inquires to render a confused situation clear. As a result of inquiry, a

self finds out what actual conditions would need to be present in order for the ideal to be achieved. Therefore, the sequence of actions eventually leads to the attainment of the ideal in actual experience. A self becomes a new or different self as it works out an ideal in present conditions.

Inquiry can be applied to a variety of situations. For instance, one can inquire into how to take apart an airplane engine or one can inquire into the behavior of dolphins. Moreover, I have mentioned that ideals can also be the focus of inquiry. But, just what are ideals and what is their role in a self's developing career? So as to get clear answers to these questions, the next chapter illuminates the nature of ideals.

Chapter II: Means, Ends, and Ideals

In order to understand Dewey's thoughts on ideals, it is necessary to situate the discussion within the broader context of Dewey's reconstruction of the means/ends distinction. Dewey set out to reconfigure the traditional view of means/ends that was pervasive in philosophy from the time of Aristotle to that of G.E. Moore.[27] Dewey was dissatisfied with the traditional distinction of means and ends because means were seen as having value merely as means and ends were seen as having value in themselves.[28] Inasmuch as Dewey understood this distinction to be troublesome, his criticisms pointed in two directions—societal conditions and philosophical discourse. With respect to philosophy, Dewey argued that the traditional means/ends distinction created a radical split between what was, in fact, valued. Means could not be said to have any value because they were seen as means to something else, which was an end beyond present activity that was valued just because it was an end. In society, Dewey noted that American workers were being used as means by industrial forces, which he viewed as dehumanizing.[29] In an effort to show how means as means could be meaningful, Dewey set out to re-conceive the traditional distinction. Dewey's new vision of means/ends would try to once again make labor a humane activity.[30] Leonard Waks writes:

> His [Dewey's] alternative to the conventional analysis highlights ordinary practical and technical activity—taking of means—as potentially a *prime component* of the good. His analysis *problematizes* situations where that

[27] See Leonard Waks. "The Means-Ends Continuum and the Reconciliation of Science and Art in the Later Works of John Dewey." *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society*. 35 no. 3 (Summer 1999): 595.

[28] Ibid. See also Bruce Nissen. "John Dewey on Means and Ends." *Philosophy Research Archives* [Microform] 3, no. 1198, (Jan. 1977): 709-738.

[29] See Leonard Waks. "The Means-Ends Continuum and the Reconciliation of Science and Art in the Later Works of John Dewey." *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society*. 35, no. 3 (Summer 1999): 596.

[30] Ibid.

> good is *missing*—where activity is good only for something that lies beyond it. His aim is to indicate how such situations may be reconstructed, becoming growth-enhancing and even enjoyable experiences.[31]

Dewey's solution to what he saw as a dichotomous split between ends and means was to suggest that the two were in fact continuous with each other. This is what Nissen refers to as Dewey's "doctrine of continuity and interdependence of means and ends," wherein means and ends are only distinguishable temporally.[32] Whereas previous philosophers had understood means to be necessarily prior to whatever end was to be achieved, Dewey saw this as wrong-headed in that means were thought to be present in an actual experience, while ends were thought to belong to a realm outside of what was actually experienceable. Dewey argued that the traditional distinction between means/ends was not useful in that one does not *actually* experience a means or an end as necessarily distinct ontological objects. His distaste for this is evident in passages like the following: "The entire popular notion of 'ideals' is infected with this conception of some fixed end beyond activity," (MW 14:154). Thus, his reconstruction of means/ends in terms of a continuum sought to demonstrate how means/ends were not "beyond present activity." Arguing that means are only temporally prior to ends in terms of causing them, Dewey's new picture of the means/ends continuum attempted to show how even though one thing, a means, can and does come prior to another thing, an end, the two really are not all that different because both are experienced in an *actual* experience.[33]

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[31] Ibid.

[32] See Bruce Nissen. "John Dewey on Means and Ends." *Philosophy Research Archives* [Microform] 3, no. 1198, (Jan. 1977): 709-738.

[33] Ibid.

Since means and ends are continuously interlinked, I understand Dewey's use of these terms to be practical; that is, since Dewey is trying to move away from the idea that means and ends have something to do with a dualistic ontology or metaphysics, his reconstruction of the terms turns on their actually being applicable to daily life. Thus, I understand Dewey's new distinction of means/ends to be telling of his overall philosophical project of instrumentalism; that is, when viewed from the standpoint that means and ends are as natural to human beings as the air they breathe, means and ends no longer reside in two separate ontological categories; rather they are part of one and the same category, which for Dewey is the category of existence.[34] Insofar as Dewey understands means and ends to be practical tools, his use of the terms breaks away from past philosophical eras in which the terms were entrenched. He views means and ends as part of everyday experience wherein the only difference between a means and an end is that one is necessarily temporally prior to the other. His use of the terms is concrete in that he views means and ends as part of everyday situations. Whenever he talks about means, I understand his meaning to be in line with what is typically thought of when one thinks of a mean—an instrument or method that is employed to obtain a specific object. Whenever Dewey talks of ends, I understand him to mean something specific. Dewey makes room for the idea that an end is an object of desire; however, his meaning also stresses that an end is the end of a temporal process beginning with an object first being

[34] In presenting Dewey's view that means and ends belong to the same ontological category, I am not intentionally committing myself to the same belief. I am only trying to present what I think Dewey would say. Whether means and ends are part of the same existential category seems to depend on one's metaphysical and epistemological views. Dewey, for example, believes in mind independent objects. Moreover, he is a direct realist who believes in the particularity of experience. For Dewey, experience is a denotative term. He is always concerned with what *this* or *that* experience is about. This view can be contrasted with someone like C.S. Peirce who believes in mind independent objects, but who also believes that experience itself is general. Even though I am aware that some might disagree with Dewey's categorization of means and ends, this remains a difficult issue that I cannot fully address here.

desired and finishing with that object actually being attained. Moreover, when Dewey talks about ends-in-view or ideals, I take him to mean imaginatively projected goals or objects of desire that one wishes to achieve, but that those goals are temporally connected to the means employed to achieve them.[35]

Having noted the context of Dewey's means/ends continuum and his terminological uses of means and ends, it will next be of interest to explain how ideals are formed. Todd Lekan argues that Dewey's account of ideals not only involves certain metaphysical commitments, but also a psychological account of how ideals are formed.[36] First, Lekan identifies Dewey's metaphysical claim that the precarious and stable nature of existence itself is in the background of Dewey's psychological account of the formation of ideals. Since Dewey argues in the second chapter of *Experience and Nature* that existence as we experience it is both stable and precarious, Lekan holds that Dewey offers an account of what existence must actually be like in order for the formation of ideals to occur. This is easily seen in Dewey's own writing in passages like the following:

> The union of the hazardous and the stable, of the incomplete and the recurrent, is the condition of all experienced satisfaction as truly as of our predicaments and problems…Because of this mixture of the regular and that which cuts across stability, a good object once experienced acquires ideal quality and attracts demand and effort to itself. A particular ideal may be an illusion, but having ideals is no illusion. It embodies features of existence. (LW 1:57)

[35] Nissen notes that ideals are "ideational;" they are ideas or imagined projections of an object of desire. See Bruce Nissen."John Dewey on Means and Ends." *Philosophy Research Archives* [Microform] 3, no. 1198, (Jan. 1977): 712.

[36] Lekan also distinguishes a third component, which he calls "Dewey's positive conception of ideals." Insofar as this thesis is concerned, I only wish to discuss the two components mentioned in the text. See Todd Lekan. "Ideals, Practical Reason, and Pessimism: Dewey's Reconstruction of Means and Ends," *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society*. 34 no. 1, (Winter 1998): 113-147.

Since existence is such-and-such a way, Dewey means that the way in which we experience the world naturally leads to our desiring something; that is, when we experience an instance of something as good, we wish to recreate similar experiences of something as being good. This leads to what Lekan terms Dewey's "psychological account" of how ideals are formed, which Dewey explains in *Human Nature and Conduct*.

Ideals emerge as new desires spring up from the daily interactions of a self and its environment. Our wants differ and we set up new goals for ourselves. As we strive to meet our goals, our accomplishments become means that we can later apply to future desires or "ends-in-view" (MW 14:155). Dewey does not mean that ends-in-view should be seen as "some fixed end beyond activity at which we should aim," (MW 14:154). On the contrary, Dewey parts ways with the Aristotelian notion of ends as being fixed (MW 14:154). He says, "Having an end or aim is thus a characteristic of *present* activity…In a strict sense an end-in-view is a *means* in present action; present action is not a means to a remote end," (MW 14:156). Using an end-in-view as a means is a continuous process. Dewey says, "Ends are, in fact, literally endless, forever coming into existence as new activities occasion new consequences," (MW 14:159). Insofar as ends are continually coming into view, we can think of an end as a "device of intelligence in guiding action, instrumental to freeing and harmonizing troubled and divided tendencies," (MW 14:159).

As shall be seen in a later commentary on habits, sometimes conflict arises between established habits and the environment. In order to bring stability to a conflicted situation, we rely on ideals or ends-in-view. As "devices of intelligence" that "guide action," Dewey explains how ideals are formed. He says:

> The beginning is with a wish, an emotional reaction against the present state of things and a hope for something different. Action fails to connect satisfactorily with surrounding conditions. Thrown back upon itself, it projects itself in an imagination of a scene which if it were present would afford satisfaction. The picture is often called an aim, more often an ideal. (MW 14:161)

Conscious of a conflict between our current actions and the existential situation in which those actions no longer function, we pause for a moment and examine the situation. Discriminating our actions comes as a result of a mismatch in actions taken and the consequences we predicted would occur. As we search for a way to unify our actions with the environment, we have to form an idea of that which will enable us to function smoothly. This specific idea that we form as a reaction to the situation is what Dewey calls an ideal. Ideals emerge through the interaction of a self and its environment. When an ideal arises and is thought of, one is imagining a scene that would lead to plotting a successful course of action. By itself, Dewey says an ideal is, "a romantic embellishment of the present; at its best it is material for poetry or the novel," (MW 14:161). In Dewey's view ideals are useful and practical, not romantic. He says, "It [an ideal] becomes an aim or end only when it is worked out in terms of concrete conditions available for its realization, that is in terms of 'means'," (MW 14:161).

With the following information concerning ideals in the background, the role of ideals becomes clear. Ideals stimulate us to bring about change in our lives. As ends-in-view, ideals are propulsive forces that guide our actions. Learning to utilize ideals means that we must learn to cooperate with environing conditions. Changes to our selves will involve changes in our surroundings. Dewey says, "This transformation depends upon study of the conditions which generate or make possible the fact observed to exist already," (MW 14:161). Successfully working out an end is contingent on our ability to

discern the conditions that would need to be present for the realization of the end to occur. In terms of the self, one must learn to study the conditions that result from inquiry in order to apply those conditions to future settings. Doing this will allow one to actualize an ideal. By noting the conditions, we become aware that reflective thought plays a role in attaining an end. But, while we reflect, our experience does not stop. We are in a continuous cycle of experiencing something.[37] Life happens in an environment, and since it does, we have to be willing to make continuous adjustments in ourselves and in our surroundings as well.

This constant interaction of a self and its environment speaks to Dewey's idea in "The Moral Self," that the self is always "becoming." The self, as ideals move it toward action, achieves an ideal in the form of concrete action. As much as ideals change, the self changes along with them. Thus, a self is continuously becoming something different each time a new ideal is achieved. This is precisely why Dewey echoes in "The Moral Self" what he says in *Human Nature and Conduct*. He writes, "Except as an outcome of arrested development, there is no such thing as a fixed, ready-made finished self," (LW 7:306). This claim reminds us that human individuality is a process. As we create our unique histories, we must keep in mind that changes in ourselves result from experiencing time, which is a part of each and every event. As an extended event in time, the human individual is constantly formed and reformed as it undergoes new events that enter into it and thereby change its very make up.

As we reshape our idea of who and what we are, we must acknowledge that we are responsible for thinking about the future. Dewey says, "The child, for example, is at

[37] See "The Reflex Arc Concept in Psychology," EW 5:96-110.

first held liable for what he has done, not because he deliberately and knowingly intended such action, but in order that *in the future* he may take into account bearings and consequences which he has failed to consider in what he *has* done," (LW 7:303). Since our views change as we age, this reminds us that there is no fixed or ready-made self behind a veil of activities. Dewey says, "Every living self causes acts and is itself caused in return by what it does. All voluntary action is a remaking of self, since it creates new desires, instigates new modes of endeavor, brings to light new conditions which institute new ends," (LW 7:306).

What we do and what others do to us becomes part of who we are. We learn from experience by working with and through life so as to remake our selves. A self is being built and rebuilt as every moment passes, which suggests Dewey's idea (and the idea found in Colapietro and Alexander) that any self experiences continuity. Dewey writes, "Our personal identity is found in the thread of continuous development which binds together these changes," (LW 7:306). This thread of development, then, is the unique history that we create as we experience events in time. These events become part of a history that is unique to each one of us. Our identity combines "new desires, new modes of endeavor, and brings to light new conditions which institute new ends," (LW 7:306). Moreover, the being that actively unites these changes finds him or her self in the very process of continuously uniting experiences with previously established habits. Again, this underscores Dewey's idea that the self is "becoming" (LW 7:306).

When we fail to use our achieved ends-in-view as means to future ends-in-view, we run the risk of becoming encased in old habits and losing our individuality. Time is not recognized as an integral part of our being and we merely subsist. Static and lifeless,

this type of self cuts short the opportunity for growth as it rests comfortably and operates on stagnant, unreflective habits. This idea is certainly prevalent in "Time and Individuality," when Dewey discusses the loss of individuality as a result of becoming "imprisoned in routine." Dewey's account of the self, however, incorporates the idea of growth as an overall end of activity. He says, "We set up this and that end to be reached, but *the* end is growth itself," (LW 7:306). If we do not take personal ends to be indicative of growth in general, we will only operate on habits that have already been formed. Dewey says, "Habit gives facility, and there is always a tendency to rest on our oars, to fall back on what we have already achieved," (LW 7:306-307). When "we tend to favor the old self and to make its perpetuation the standard of our valuations and the end of our conduct," Dewey says, "we withdraw from actual conditions and their requirements and opportunities; we contract and harden the self," (LW 7:307). If we are to continue forming and reforming ourselves throughout our lives, we must be willing to learn from the experiences we undergo and the results that follow. Dewey says, "The growing, enlarging, liberated self, on the other hand, goes forth to meet new demands and occasions, and readapts and remakes itself in the process," (LW 7:307).

In life, we desire unity between the environment and ourselves. According to Dewey, we seek this unification because we long for perfect being.[38] However, as Dewey says in *Human Nature and Conduct,* we "arrive at true conceptions of motivation and interest only by the recognition that selfhood (except as it has encased itself in a shell of routine) is in process of making, and that any self is capable of including within itself a number of inconsistent selves, of unharmonized dispositions," (MW 14:96). To the extent

[38] See LW 1:58.

that each self is in process, this means that there is no concrete self behind every action taken or every decision made. This idea seems to result from Dewey's replacement of the Cartesian "I" as a substance with his naturalistic claim that the essence of the individual is "temporal seriality." That is, when we realize that we are beings in time whose essence is itself temporal, we see that it would be impossible for any individual to be a permanent or unchanging substantial entity. Selves change daily when new ideals are formed, worked toward, and achieved.

As a result of change, we sometimes feel discordance within ourselves, and this perceived quality is perfectly natural. However, reconciling the imbalance of "inconsistent selves" is not something to which we should turn a blind eye. Paying attention to the ideal self that we have in mind allows us to imagine what conditions need to be present for the ideal to be achieved. While we imagine, we think about what it would take for us to obtain the particular ideal. Imaginative projections of our ideal selves open the door for inquiry and for the harmonization of the competing tendencies or various, inconsistent selves that sometimes give rise to the aching question, "Who am I?" When we experience a sense of confusion regarding who we are due to our understanding that we are not growing intellectually or morally, we call upon our imagination. We use it to think about the implications that accompany the realization of an ideal.

In order for the self to grow and not fall into the habit of "resting on its oars," we must recognize the powerful or "action-guiding" nature of ideals. Their role in the on-going development of an individual's career is to stimulate us to action. Dewey says, "…the reality of ideal ends as ideals is vouched for by their undeniable power in action," (LW 9:30). All ideals are not necessarily unrealizable dreams. They are thoughts and

desires about the future that are put to practical use to move a self through its different transitions or events in life. Dewey continues by saying, "An ideal is not an illusion because imagination is the organ through which it is apprehended. For *all* possibilities reach us through the imagination," (LW 9:30). Dewey's instrumentalism certainly comes to the foreground. He does not mean that imagination is always used for conjuring wondrous unattainable daydreams; instead imagination can be utilized to trace out the possible implications of different ideals. Indeed, he says, "In a definite sense the only meaning that can be assigned to the term 'imagination' is that things unrealized in fact come home to us and have the power to stir us," (LW 9:30). Although this view does not convert imagination into an imaginary place, imagination does involve hypothesizing. When Dewey says, "things unrealized in fact come home to us," he means that we are able to think about ideals or an ideal hypothetically. Moreover, when we engage in this thought process we focus all of our attention on the ideal we want to investigate. Doing this will allow time for deliberate thought to enter into the process and evaluate the ideal at hand.

When an ideal is examined, the one examining it is engaged in what Dewey calls deliberation, which is part of the overall process of inquiry.[39] Even though Dewey's description of deliberation focuses on aligning habits and impulses, the process is nonetheless applicable to ideals. Insofar as achieving ideals requires a modification of an old habit or the creation of a new one, habits are involved in the process of attaining ideals. In *Human Nature and Conduct*, Dewey writes:

[39] Critical thinking in which an inquirer hypothesizes about possible solutions to problematic situation is only one of various phases of inquiry. See David Hildebrand. *Dewey: A Beginner's Guide.* Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2008. 40-62.

> deliberation…is a dramatic rehearsal (in imagination) of various competing possible lines of action. It starts from the blocking of efficient overt action, due to that conflict of prior habit and newly released impulse...then, each habit, each impulse, involved in the temporary suspense of overt action takes its turn in being tried out. Deliberation is an experiment in finding out what the various lines of possible action are really like. It is an experiment in making various combinations of selected elements of habits and impulses, to see what the resultant action would be like if it were entered upon. (MW 14:132-133)

Our desire to recreate a meaningful experience causes an ideal to emerge from within a concrete situation. Our established habits try to keep impulses in check. As we strive for new ideals, the cycle can be overwhelming to the point of confusion. What do we do when we do not know which ideal to select and investigate? Dewey's solution involves deliberation. After imagining an ideal, we deliberate or think critically about the ideal in question. Deliberation is part of the process of inquiry in which ideals are examined. Through critically evaluating ideals, we come to understand their practicality. Again we witness Dewey's instrumentalism in that deliberation is a tool we use to evaluate ideals.

In the process of deliberation, we turn over one habit, or in this case ideal, at a time. We think about what an action would have to be like if we were to act in such a way as to try to achieve the ideal. We envision what types of changes to previous habits we would have to make if we were to take on the challenge of achieving an ideal. The development of each self hinges on the ability to project thought forward in the form of an ideal and to work to achieve that goal, for this is how we continue to develop our unique, life-long careers. That this is done through the imagination is a claim that Dewey takes seriously. He says, "The unification effected through imagination is not fanciful, for it is the reflex of the unification of practical and emotional attitudes," (LW 9:30). Deliberation, as it relates to an imaginative scene in which inquiry is going on, allows us

to picture what it would mean to work out the ideal in concrete terms. The elimination of conflicting habits and impulses allows the self to achieve a desired ideal. Once the ideal is achieved, the entire event becomes part of an individual's overall history. Thus, when we try out different competing lines of action, we are in essence imagining our selves in the process of working out our ideals and adding to our histories. Dewey says:

> But the trial is in imagination, not in overt fact. The experiment is carried on by tentative rehearsals in thought which do not affect physical facts outside the body. Thought runs ahead and foresees outcomes, and thereby avoids having to await the instruction of actual failure and disaster. An act overtly tried out is irrevocable, its consequences cannot be blotted out. An act tried out in imagination is not final or fatal. It is retrievable. (MW 14:132-133)

Since we are not always assured of which ideal to pursue, deliberation is helpful because we can think about acting before we really act. While we undergo "rehearsals in thought," we come to realize which line of action will lead us to the attainment of the ideal we have in mind. Through our efforts to attain an ideal, we become a different self with a new event that becomes part of our unique history.

If the whole self is an "ideal" or an "imaginative projection," it is meant that we create this idea of a whole self because we have a desire to be complete. The idea that we can even have a whole self seems to be an idea left over from the Modern era that sends us searching for the unity of body and soul in a realm of eternal being. In *Experience and Nature,* Dewey says:

> We long, amid a troubled world, for perfect being. We forget that what gives meaning to the notion of perfection is the events that create longing, and that, apart from them, a 'perfect' world would mean just an unchanging brute existential thing. (LW 1:58)

Since Dewey is out to replace the idea that human selves are substances that persist through time, it makes sense that he would characterize the whole self as an imaginative

projection; that is, Dewey realizes that the impact of Modern philosophy still penetrates into our idea of what a self is. Thus, his characterization of the whole self as an ideal is meant to show us that we will not ever find a concrete or substantial self. We can wish all we want and we can kick and scream if we want to, but since the essence of what we are is always changing, we will have to let go of the idea that there is anything fixed about our individuality. However, this does not mean that ideals are of no help to us. As has been discussed, the role of ideals in self-development is to propel a self to action so that its unique history is not lost to mindless habit.

In short, we must be willing to accept that there is no concrete or whole self behind any activity in which we are engaged. The notion of a concrete, substantial self must be seen as a relic from previous philosophies that no longer serves our understanding of what an individual is. Dewey's rendering of individuality as an event is meant to demonstrate that the idea of a complete self is not attainable if one searches for a substance that persists through time. Leaving this idea behind frees us from an idea that overshadows the way in which we actually experience life; that is, daily life moves and shifts while we are constantly on the go. These moves and shifts are the events in which the meanings of life are to be found. When we accept the idea, as Dewey does, that these events become part and parcel of our unique life histories, we can begin to see that selfhood is truly a process. Moreover, the self into which one is always becoming is the result of adjusted habits that bring about the successful union of a self that is out of balance with its environment. The disequilibrium between an organic self and the future ideal it envisions itself to be is worked out after having first envisioned what concrete conditions must be like in order for an ideal to be achieved. In other words, as we operate

on somewhat settled habits, those habits only carry us so far. We experience new scenes that require us to change. The organic self that acts and the environment in which it acts sometimes become out of tune with one another, and ideals are set up as new ways to overcome a current problem. Once this successful union of self and ideal has occurred through the self's adjustment to a habit, the event is thereby added to the stock of historical events united together in time that form an individual's unique career.

We are always in contact with ideals because they arise in everyday situations. It should not be too surprising that Dewey's naturalism in *A Common Faith* is as evident as it is in *Human Nature and Conduct*. By applying the ideas of change and time to the self Dewey is able to show how the self changes throughout a lifetime.[40] Taking the functionality of imagination seriously, he says, "The idealizing imagination seizes upon the most precious things found in the climacteric moments of experience and projects them," (LW 9:33).

Through our imaginative projections of our selves, we examine ideals one by one and think of them individually. Dewey continues, "The aims and ideals that move us are generated through imagination. But they are not made out of imaginary stuff. They are made out of the hard stuff of the world of physical and social experience," (LW 9:33). This line of thought is somewhat of a foreshadowing of a discussion about habits and impulses being wrapped up in social circumstances. In the same way the environment influences each self, that self, in turn, must learn to co-operate with the environment so as to achieve its ideals. Dewey says:

> The locomotive did not exist before Stevenson, nor the telegraph before the time of Morse. But the conditions for their existence were there in

[40] See "The Influence of Darwinism on Philosophy," MW 4:3-14.

> physical material and energies and in human capacity. Imagination seized hold upon the idea of a rearrangement of existing things that would evolve new objects. (LW 9:33-34)

Once again we notice Dewey stressing the importance of using the imagination in a practical way. Putting the imagination to work allows for an ideal to be captured in thought. While being discriminated, the ideal is subjected to the process of deliberation where it is thought about until a course of action becomes clear.[41] Once one thinks of the actual conditions that would need to be present for the ideal to be satisfactorily worked out, one can begin to take steps toward achieving the ideal.

Ideals exist precisely because we experience the world in such-and-such a way. Good experiences lead us to want to recreate similar experiences. Due to this desire, we create ideals. In order to examine a particular ideal, one must learn to use the imagination as a tool for inspection. Ends-in-view become clearer as we think about them individually. We project each ideal in an imaginative scene. Once we think about an ideal, we form an idea of what actual conditions would need to be like in order for the ideal to be worked out in actual experience.

When we imagine an ideal, we are in essence forming an idea of the type of self into which we want to grow. Various actions and habits will go into transforming that ideal from something imagined into something actual. After having imagined an ideal, imagination quickly leads to deliberation. Deliberating allows us to trace out the implications of acting on the ideal. A thorough inspection of or inquiry into an ideal will reveal whether we should pursue a line of action leading to the achievement of the ideal. Attaining the ideal will require adjustments to our selves. Each adjustment is taken in

[41] See Dewey's thoughts on the process of deliberation in MW 14:132-133.

stride as the self continues to develop. As we use imagination to inspect an ideal, it thereby allows us to form an idea of what and who we want to become.

Becoming a new self requires letting go of old habits that no longer function. One has to be attuned to his or her habits so as to be able to remake them whenever it is necessary to do so. The self one wishes to become is thus given life due to the ways in which one interacts with the environment in order to fulfill an ideal. The process of ideals coming into view and getting actualized is precisely how the self continues to grow throughout a lifetime. This process of change is an ongoing endeavor that any self undergoes as it continuously develops into what it envisions itself to be.

Coming to know the ideals a self envisions is an investigatory process. Inasmuch as ideals continuously come into view, a self steadily grows and becomes a new self with adjusted habits and thought processes. When an ideal is inquired into, it is turned over and inspected so as to decide whether one will take steps toward its actualization. Arising from our everyday interactions with the environment, ideals or ends-in-view should be subjected to controlled inquiry in order to understand which habits will have to be adjusted so as to attain the ideal in focus. Inquiry into an ideal provides the chance to examine an ideal closely so as to decide whether to act on the particular ideal. Much like imagination, inquiry is functional in that it serves as a way to inspect ideals. It is necessary to discuss this process because ideals have a crucial role in self-development. Since ideals are important in that they motivate us to act, we need to know how to investigate ideals so that they are not mere daydreams or illusions.

Dewey says:

> But unless ideals are to be dreams and idealism a synonym for romanticism and phantasy-building, *there must be a most realistic study of*

> *actual conditions and of the mode or law of natural events, in order to give the imagined or ideal object definite form and solid substance—to give it, in short, practicality and constitute it a working end.* (MW 14:162, emphasis mine)

Dewey seems to imply that there is a process one engages in when one wants to know about ideals; that is, to undertake a most realistic study of actual conditions means, for Dewey, to inquire. It is relevant to highlight inquiry because becoming a new self turns on one's ability to focus on a particular ideal and take steps toward achieving it.

As a self undergoes change, something far more fundamental occurs at an organic level—habits are being shaped and reshaped. In this chapter, I have only briefly touched on the idea that habits are modified through adjustments because this chapter has been about ideals. However, in the next chapter, I will address the questions, "What are habits and what is a specific habit that one can form to ensure that one's unique history prospers?" I will look at how the formation of a specific habit requires what Dewey calls "intelligence." Intelligence needs to be used in order to change habits and to continue adding to one's unique history.

Chapter III: Habit and Impulse

Although the role of inquiry has been discussed in terms of recognizing possible solutions to problematic situations, inquiry also allows a self to become aware of certain habits that will need to be modified for an ideal to be achieved. The self that Dewey envisions always changes, remaking itself as habits become realigned throughout one's life. These modifications are what Dewey calls "adjustments," and prior to an in-depth look at habits, I would like to elaborate briefly on Dewey's understanding of "adjustments."

In *A Common Faith*, Dewey's commentary on adjustments falls within a larger discussion of how adjustments of the self relate to two other terms—accommodation and adaptation. Discriminating between the three terms, Dewey begins with accommodation. He says, "There are conditions we meet that cannot be changed. If they are particular and limited, we modify our own particular attitudes in accordance with them. We thus accommodate ourselves to changes in weather, to alterations in income when we have no other recourse…The two main traits of this attitude, which I should like to call accommodation, are that it affects *particular* modes of conduct, not the entire self, and that the process is mainly *passive*," (LW 9:12). An accommodation in this sense requires that we realize that environing conditions are sometimes rather unchangeable. For example, upon leaving his house in the morning, a man notices that it is raining. The conditions in which he finds himself are somewhat settled for the time being. His wish that the rain would disappear would not, in itself, change the environment. Only after another incoming atmospheric change carries off the current pressure cell can the rain fully stop. Thus, the man reacts, or as Dewey says, is "conditioned" to the situation (LW

9:12). The passive accommodation, in this case, is to accept conditions as they are and accommodate them by using an umbrella.

Akin to accommodation is an adaptation. Adaptations are characteristically more active than accommodations. Dewey says:

> We re-act against conditions and endeavor to change them to meet our wants and demands. Plays in a foreign language are 'adapted' to meet the needs of an American audience. A house is rebuilt to suit changed conditions of the household…Instead of accommodating ourselves to conditions, we modify conditions so that they will be accommodated to our wants and purposes. (LW 9:12)

Adaptations are ways of working with environing conditions so as to satisfy a current need. Thus, Dewey's example of play in a foreign language being adapted to suit the needs of an American audience is a way to show how an adaptation comes about. Since it is usually the case that an audience composed of Americans who speak English will not understand a play in French, the play must be translated into a language that the American audience can understand. The act of translation, as it is an adaptation, requires more detailed action than an accommodation. A translator working from French to English, for instance, not only takes into account the words on the page, but what they mean in the context of the whole play. The act of translating involves active thought on the part of the translator as he or she considers words, their meanings, and the environing conditions in which they will be understood. It is because an American audience would re-act against a play in French in terms of not understanding it, that a translator must decipher words and their meanings so as to suit the needs of the audience that will watch the play.

When accommodations and adaptations combine the result is what Dewey calls an adjustment. Adjustments impact our being as a whole. This is why Dewey says that

adjustments are "voluntary" (LW 9:12). These voluntary shifts in our being are a "composing and harmonizing of the various elements of our being such that, in spite of changes in the special conditions that surround us, these conditions are also arranged, settled, in relation to us," (LW 9:12). We make adjustments to our selves based on our recognition that certain conditions demand satisfaction and that our previously accommodated attitudes or habits no longer function. We learn to interact with the environment so as to bring about a desired result that gives a lasting change to our selves. When adjustments are made, one is, on Dewey's view, changing that which fundamentally comprises a self—habits.

The first chapter of *Human Nature and Conduct* outlines how habits shape a human organism. Dewey makes explicit the need to see habits as functions that help an organism get along or cooperate with its environment. As functions, habits underlie the self and give it structure. Since habits make up a self and those same habits (in the form of routine) can later be responsible for the downfall or loss of a self, it is critical to understand what habits are and how to form habits that promote the growth of an individual's career. Dewey says, "Habits may be profitably compared to physiological functions like breathing, digesting. The latter are, to be sure, involuntary, while habits are acquired," (MW 14:15). Habits like breathing or digesting are natural; that is, organisms breathe and digest in order to sustain life. Comparing habits to physiological functions is Dewey's way of demonstrating how habits function as natural channels through which an organism cooperates with its environment.

Although habits function within an individual, they are also functions of one's surroundings. Dewey says, "The same air that under certain conditions ruffles the pool or

wrecks buildings, under other conditions purifies the blood and conveys thought. The outcome depends upon what air acts upon," (MW 14:15). Environments have characteristics that make them what they are. Understanding that Dewey views characteristics as applicable to an environment and to any individual in an environment is important because the self is not an isolated organism. Through the relationship of organism and environment, we will see that habits manifest themselves in an organism depending on how that organism interacts with its environment.

According to Dewey, habits involve "skill of sensory and motor organs, cunning or craft, and objective materials. They [habits] assimilate objective energies, and eventuate in command of the environment. They require order, discipline, and manifest technique," (MW 14:15-16). When a human organism begins to acquire habits, he or she learns to interact with the environment. By learning to "command the environment," an individual better understands how to get along in a particular setting. Our habits are formed out of our interactions with environing conditions.

Dewey's point in demonstrating that habits come by way of our interactions with the environment is to show how conduct is social. The individual and the environment are generally discussed together with the understanding that distinctions between the two can sometimes be subtle. Speaking of a self that is always in some type of interaction with its environment, Dewey drives home the idea that our actions are acquired ways of acting that not only influence the environment but others in it as well. He says, "But since habits involve the support of environing conditions, a society or some specific group of fellow men, is always accessory before and after the fact," (MW 14:16). Once we act, our actions are thrown into the public arena for others to judge. Dewey says, "Some activity

proceeds from a man; then it sets up reactions in the surroundings. Others approve, disapprove, protest, encourage, share and resist," (MW 14:16). In other words, once an act is done, it smacks against surroundings, rippling through society while others react to it. Our actions impact the environment. This is why Dewey says, "Conduct is always shared," (MW 14:16).

Changing a habit is not a thoughtless process. We change habit "indirectly by modifying conditions, by an intelligent selecting and weighting of the objects which engage attention and which influence the fulfillment of desires," (MW 14:19). To improve conditions, we have to remember that we can change objective features of experience. How we come into the world is not a choice, but the choices of those before us have shaped objective conditions as we experience them. Our interactions with objective conditions aid in self-development, and this is why Dewey says, "Our individual habits are links in forming the endless chain of humanity," (MW 14:19).

By stressing the social or objective nature of habits, Dewey wants to show how our habits impact the environment and others in it. He does not, though, leave the subjective factors in habits by the wayside. Our tastes and personal desires oftentimes lead to productive and helpful activities. Dewey writes, "Taste for flowers may be the initial step in building reservoirs and irrigation canals," (MW 14:20). In fact, Dewey holds that our personal habits gain support from the objective conditions in which they operate. He says, "Taste and desire represent a prior objective fact recurring in action to secure perpetuation and extension," (MW 14:20). We desire something only after having experienced it and wanting to recreate a similar experience. Dewey would not hesitate to call that which we desire an ideal, and this is why he claims that ideals are "preceded by

actuality," (MW 14:20). That we have ideals and strive to achieve them speaks to the idea of growth as the overall end of activity. Striving to improve objective conditions by way of changing personal habits for the better is the goal of morality. The selves involved in this process are necessarily responsible moral agents functioning on years of embedded habits.

Habits, though, are not "passive tools waiting to be called into action from without," (MW 14:21). When habits are viewed as controlling forces acting upon us from without, we have a tendency to convert the habit into an evil power. Habits are seen as manipulative forces pulling us this way and that. The gambling addict, for instance, feels helpless because he is the habit(s) he embodies. He becomes bound by routine, and the root of his routine is at least one habit but probably a collection of various habits. His compulsive urge to wager money is a manifestation of his habit(s). In order to break from this obsession he must learn to be flexible and take on new habits as old habits no longer function. If he does not exercise flexibility, he will simply remain caught in the deep grooves of his hardened habits. His individuality will become lost as he tries to dig out of the grooves but cannot because he does not know how to form new habits. The result is what Dewey would call "full-blown absentmindedness," (MW 14:122).

Our escape from irking routine turns on our ability "to do old things in new ways, and thus construct new ends and means," (MW 14:118). Dewey says, "Breach in the crust of the cake of custom releases impulses; but it is the work of intelligence to find the ways of using them," (MW 14:118). Intelligence has the job of putting impulses to work so as to readjust habits and thereby make it easier for us to become new selves. Our habits of thought should promote the growth of our individual histories. Maintaining an

open mind and practicing growth-promoting thought processes will help ensure that our histories do not fall victim to dreadful routine. One specific habit that we can cultivate is the habit of inquiring into something when we are unsure of its meaning. Certainly this would help ensure the furtherance of one's history.

Once habits are acquired, they can be seen as "demands for certain kinds of activity," (MW 14:21). The conditions that helped form a gambler's habits, if the gambler remains in those conditions, command him to act in certain ways. For instance, a gambling addict at a horse track is in a situation in which others around him are betting on many different races. Since he has already acquired the habit of betting, this habit comes to the forefront of his actions and dominates him, commanding him to bet. Once his craving to bet, which is a manifestation of his acquired addictive habit, is satisfied, he only has to wait until the next race for his habit to take over his actions once more. If, however, the gambler learns to take on new habits with which to combat the habits of addiction, he can learn to command the addictive habit differently. A change of environment could indeed help a gambling addict break his mindless routine of placing one bet after another. Even though a gambler's environment plays a role in the acquisition of betting habits, overall control of those habits is based on how well or poorly he learns to interact with environments in which gambling might occur. So as to ensure the development of the gambler's individual history, he would want to acquire new, fresh habits that help ward off the feeling of being encapsulated in habitual routine.

When Dewey says that habits are "affections" that have "projectile power," he means that habits influence our thoughts in a given situation (MW 14:21). Moreover, these ways of acting come together to "constitute the self" (MW 14:21). By making this

claim Dewey shows that habits are the most basic constituents of a human organism. A change in habit cannot come by way of simply willing a habit to change. If habits are to change, one must work so as to form a "joint adaptation to each other of human powers and physical conditions," (MW 14:22). In short, one must make an adjustment to one's self so that the adjustment allows the formation of a new or refined habit.

Modifying habits comes through our ability to view ends as means. Dewey says:

> The 'end' is merely a series of acts viewed at a remote stage; and a means is merely the series viewed at an earlier one. The distinction of means and ends arises in surveying the *course* of a proposed *line* of action, a connected series in time…To *reach* an end we must take our mind off from it [end] and attend to the act which is next to be performed. We must make that the end. (MW 14:27)

In order to change a habit or the self, we must pay attention to the events that happen in everyday experience. As has been discussed, ideals or ends-in-view arise out of the interaction of any self and its environment. If we are to modify our selves or our environmental conditions, the changes will be a result of taking the end-in-view at which we aim and converting it into a means that we can use along the way to achieving our desired result. Thus our ends become means as we learn to use them to modify habits. Each means is therefore a new end in attaining our goal. Dewey says, "Until one takes intermediate acts seriously enough to treat them as ends, one wastes one's time in any effort at change of habits," (MW 14:28). Dewey views means and ends as "two names for the same reality," (MW 14:28). In an effort to erase the line between conduct that is moral or non-moral, Dewey wants to say that habits are indeed personal, subjective ways of acting, but since those personal traits are developed in conjunction with an environment, our conduct is the result of social interactions. If our histories are to

flourish, we need to pay attention to "the thing which is closest to us, the means within our power," or our habits (MW 14:29).

Dewey's notion that the self is constituted of habits brought about by social interaction demonstrates his concern for explaining how humans are biologically as well as socially constructed. However, becoming an individual requires that we acknowledge the presence of time in everyday experience. Our experience of time not only modifies our unique histories, but also binds those histories together.

In his awareness of biological matters, Dewey discusses impulse in *Human Nature and Conduct* by stressing how we are beings with native impulses. In fact, impulse precedes habit. Dewey does not cast the self strictly in terms of physiological impulses because those impulses require an environment if they are to gain meaning. He says, "Impulses although first in time are never primary in fact; they are secondary and dependent. The seeming paradox in statement covers a familiar fact. In the life of the individual, instinctive activity comes first," (MW 14:65).

Since we begin life as infants, we have no way of getting along in the world. Sure we may have native twinges that result in some response, but for that response to gain meaning, other people in the environment must act in response to the impulse. This is why Dewey says, "In short, the *meaning* of native activities is not native; it is acquired. It is dependent upon interaction with a matured social medium," (MW 14:65). A baby, for instance, cries when it needs changed or when it is hungry. For those cries to mean something, others must perceive them. Thus, a cry indicating hunger stands for something while it also stands in relation to someone who interprets the cry. Dewey would not hesitate to say that humans are born with a similar set of impulses, but how

those impulses develop into habits will depend on the environment. He says, "Any impulse may become organized into almost any disposition according to the way it interacts with surroundings," (MW 14:69). We thereby acquire the habits of our surroundings as our impulses are interpreted within the context of our environment.

Habits instilled in the young come to "govern conscious thought later" (MW 14:71). If we are to continue to grow, we must be aware of our habits. Since our deepest-seated habits influence how we think in the future, we must note how well or poorly our habits function in the present if we are to change the future.

Due to the future-oriented nature of the self, we should recognize that nothing is fixed or final in life. Our idea of reaching a fixed moral end or final self must be thrown out if we are to understand how the self is to grow alongside the environment. Dewey writes, "If modern thought and sentiment is to escape from this division in its ideals, it must be through utilizing released impulse as an agent of steady reorganization of customs and institutions," (MW 14:72). By paying attention to how impulse can recast an old habit to serve a new situation, we can see that the betterment of society and of the selves in that society comes by way of our conscious effort to change. Dewey says, "Impulse in short brings with itself the possibility but not the assurance of a steady reorganization of habits to meet new elements in new situations," (MW 14:75). In short, we would do well to pay attention to our impulses when we have them because they can lead to changes in habits and changes in our environments. This is important because Dewey takes the idea of change seriously and applies it to his overall outlook of morality and to his thoughts concerning the nature of the self.

When we remove "belief in the fixity and simplicity of the self," we really gain insight into selfhood (MW 14:96). We can "arrive at true conceptions of motivation and interest only by the recognition that selfhood (except as it has encased itself in a shell of routine) is in process of making, and that any self is capable of including within itself a number of inconsistent selves, of unharmonized dispositions," (MW 14:96). Due to the fact that we change from birth to death, our selves are made and remade throughout our lifetimes. We do not always know what or who we are. This is precisely why the self can contain a number of inconsistent selves. Relinquishing "a traditional conception of the singleness and simplicity of soul and self blinds us to perceiving what they mean: the relative fluidity and diversity of the constituents of selfhood," (MW 14:96). Unless our habits become fixed in a "shell of routine," we are able to readjust habits so as to cooperate with the environment. Since our daily backgrounds are always shifting, we must be able to glide along with them at moment's notice. People and other objects of experience gain attention for only so long. Our days are filled with constantly moving scenes that require attention. All of these interactions come together in the events that form to make up our lives. The self evolves with and through its environmental conditions. Thus when Dewey articulates, "there is no fixed and ready-made self behind activities," he is reiterating the idea that a self is not a substantial entity. Since the essence of the individual is time itself, a self can have a number of inconsistent selves within it (MW 14:96). These inconsistent selves are "complex, unstable, opposing attitudes, habits, impulses, which gradually come to terms with one another, and assume a certain consistency of configuration…" (MW 14:96). When we experience dissonance in ourselves, a part of our make up is out of step with the rest of the parts. Searching for a

way to harmonize our competing tendencies promotes the growth of the self. By aligning that which configures the self we are able to command resources that enlarge the self (MW 14:97). Controlling the resources that stimulate self-growth helps us find the best way possible of uniting our conflicting habits and impulses. Even though the conception of who we are will come into attention, it will remain there only for an instant. The concept undergoes change while it is being thought of. Forming a stable idea of the self is beneficial because we can examine our habits more thoroughly and learn the best way to modify them. Selves change when habits are modified. These changes, moreover, are brought about by the propulsive nature of ideals that we work to achieve through the cultivation of intelligent habits.

Conclusion

In the introduction I asked, "If human individuality can be threatened and even lost, what are some practical ideas in Dewey's philosophy that can be used to ensure the perpetuation of one's individuality?" Exploring the themes in this thesis has been a process of inquiry. Throughout this inquiry, I have stopped along the way to pinpoint practical tools in Dewey's philosophy that can be used to ensure the continuance of one's unique history.

As was discussed in the first chapter, Dewey does away with the idea that the self or individual is a substance. Instead, he replaces substance with the idea of process, giving an account of individuality that incorporates time. As part of everyday experience, time continuously links together events that form an individual's distinct career. Indeed, the essence of an individual is temporal seriality. From Dewey's perspective this means that an account of human individuality must take into consideration change and time as they apply to one's unique history. As we have seen, one's individuality can be threatened and even lost if it is engulfed by monotonous routine. So as to avoid a life of slogging through the daily grind, one must be aware of the relationship between time, inquiry, ideals, and habits. Being mindful of this relationship facilitates one's ability to make each experience as meaningful as possible. Understanding the powerful bond between these elements helps to ensure the survival of one's unique history.

At a very basic level, a human is a biological organism that comes into a world saturated with culture and tradition. When a human organism enters the world as a baby it begins experiencing life as an on-going process. Most babies mature and their habits begin to take shape in order to allow them to function in an environment. Language is

acquired at an early age, and most of us eventually learn to use self-referent symbols to distinguish ourselves from others in the community.

Specific to a human is the way that it experiences the hazardous and stable conditions of life. These conditions are the source of all that is experienced, whether good or bad. Sometimes, though, experiences occur in which established habits do not function. This brings about a desire to overcome the situation. Inquiry ensues as one searches for the conditions that need to be present to overcome the problematic situation. Inquiry not only involves imagination but also deliberation. As a tool, inquiry is useful in that it allows a self to combat blocked growth.

In the second chapter, I mentioned how inquiry can be applied to a variety of situations in which one focuses on different objects of observation. For instance, ideals can take their turn in inquiry so that a problematic situation can be resolved. Satisfaction of the situation requires an adjustment of an old, stale habit or the acquisition of a new one. Not all ideals have to be submitted to inquiry. Inquiry is relevant at those times when a human organism does not grow and thus experiences stagnation due to becoming "imprisoned in routine." This feeling of sluggish routine can destroy individuality. If the self is to be fully alive, it must learn to exercise intelligence so as to acquire new habits that are conducive to growth. As biological organisms we will undergo all sorts of physical changes from birth to death. But as individuals, our lives must be about more than simple chemical and physical changes. We only have one opportunity to make a meaningful life, and we must be willing to accept the fact that change is going to happen anyway. However, our task is to find a way to control the direction of change itself. We have to find a way to direct change so that we can create meaningful experiences. For

Dewey, art is the expression of individuality, and this means that as each one of us feels the passing of time, we must find a way to control the changes that we undergo.[42] Such is the job of inquiry.

As inquiry unfolds in which consequences and meanings are traced out, this process helps form an understanding of what concrete conditions need to be present in order for a problematic situation to be resolved. Inquiry as a way to investigate ideals serves as a way for a self to make an informed decision about which line of action to take that will lead to the attainment of a specific ideal. As an individual's history is being constructed, ideals serve a propulsive function in that they help direct the quality of change.

In the last chapter I explained how habits are adjusted and readjusted after choosing a course of action and taking steps toward the realization of the ideal into which one originally inquired. Through its actions, an organism makes adjustments to its current stock of habits in an effort to move closer to the goal of attaining the ideal. Concrete action in the here-and-now instantiates the ideal in present conditions. No longer an imagined possibility, an ideal becomes real as a self embodies it. As we experience the ceaseless flux of existence, we work to achieve ideals throughout our lifetimes. Our attainment of specific ideals means that specific goals have been accomplished and can therefore be seen as part of the unique histories or careers that make us just who we are. The continuation of an individual's unique history is facilitated by one's actions that result from inquiring into an ideal. Learning to use inquiry as a tool to inspect ideals is a specific habit that one can cultivate in order to block the onset of monotonous routine. Moreover, Dewey would say that the job of intelligence is to put impulses to work so that

[42] See LW 14:114.

habits become readjusted. By making adjustments we become new selves. Thinking should encourage the growth of an individual's history. Continuing to practice activities that promote growth will establish habits in us that allow our individual histories to thrive. As we seek continual self-growth, our habits cannot become stale. They must remain fresh and active if one is to live a life full of meaning. Habits that tend to feed monotony and contribute to the loss of individuality must remain open to change. Intelligence guides one to forming helpful, healthy habits that further the meaning of each lived experience that becomes a part of one's overall individuality.

On Dewey's view, we are not complete substantial entities, though we do have a tendency to think of ourselves as being complete at one time or another. In fact, Dewey holds that as part of our basic psychology we desire to be complete. Dewey also tells us that being a complete self is attainable in terms of an imaginative, not a literal idea.[43] However, the upshot is that if we are to construct a life full of expression and meaning, we must learn to tap into the inspirational power of our ideals, for ideals help direct change so that we can achieve more of our goals throughout life. Ideals thereby guide us through the whirlwind of temporally unified events that come together to make up our individual histories.

As we learn to achieve our ideals in concrete form, our habits are shaped and reshaped everyday. We must cultivate intelligent and flexible habits if our individual histories are to grow each and every day. By practicing habits of inquiry we can learn to scrutinize our ideals so as to be able to select the ideal that we truly desire from among

[43] Here Dewey seems to mean that since one's self cannot be whole or complete because one has not lived through a lifetime of experiences, one's history is not complete. Thus, one must invoke his or her imagination in order to hypothesize about the type of self one will become after undergoing certain experiences. See LW 9:14.

the many possibilities that are available to us. As our habits are adjusted and we become new selves we must always remember that our individuality is at risk of becoming shackled in mindless routine. If we are to defend ourselves against the banality and drudgery of routine, we must create a life full of meaning. In this thesis, I have demonstrated that creating a meaningful history is possible if one uses inquiry as a response to the stagnation of one's individuality. Through inquiry one refines and cultivates intelligent habits. These habits are helpful in that they promote the evolving nature of the self. Since selves on Dewey's account are not whole or complete substantial entities, this means that selves are constructed throughout lifetimes of experience. The process of self-making is not simply a haphazard event. Becoming a specific type of self is a process that requires trained thinking and habits of reflection. Without a clear understanding of how to direct changes, one is likely to stagnate. Therefore, it seems rather important to know how to go about constructing one's self. As a response to my initial question, I have accounted for the tools that are vital to the continuous construction of our individual histories. Expressing individuality in the Deweyan sense is a form of art with which one must become intimately acquainted throughout one's life. Mastering the art of self-making and directing change to work to one's advantage is thus possible if one is aware of how to use the tools of inquiry, ideals, and habits for the betterment and overall growth of one's extraordinary individuality.

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